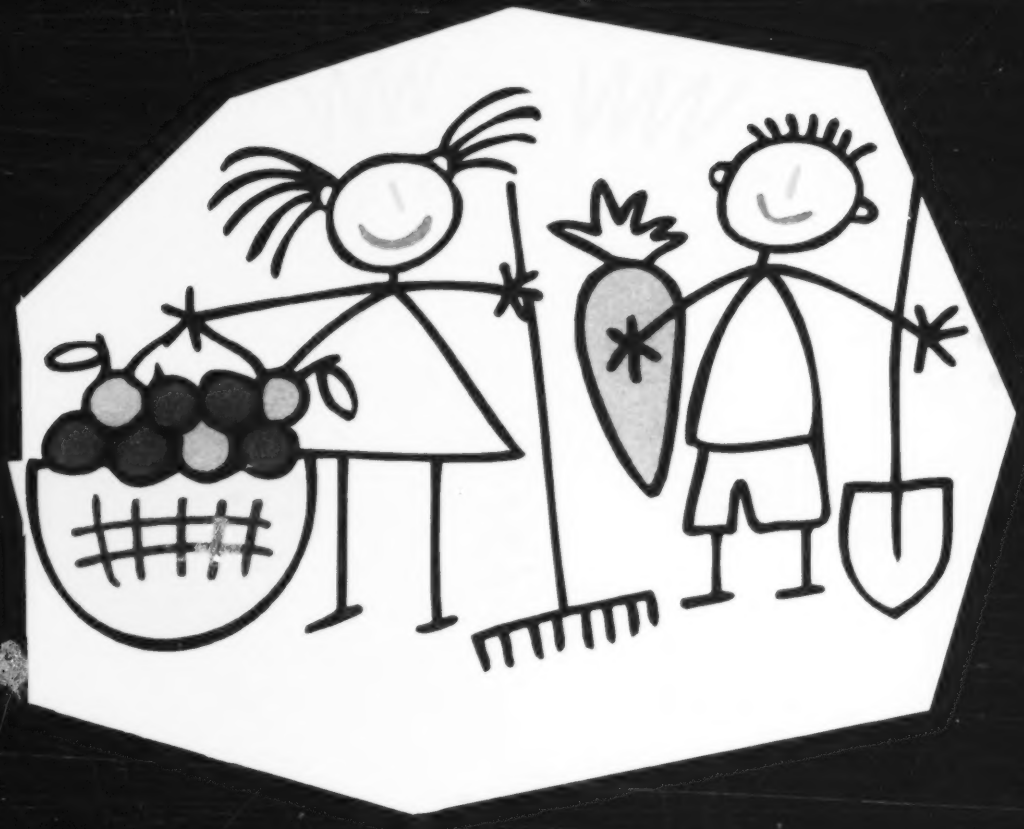
Healthy Eating Strategy
for Island Children and Youth
2002 - 2005



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Healthy Eating Strategy

for Island Children and Youth 2002-2005

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Executive Summary

The Prince Edward Island Healthy Eating Alliance (HEA) is a group of approximately 40 organizations (both government and non-government) and individuals, dedicated to the improvement of eating habits of children and youth on Prince Edward Island. It has been formed as a direct result of the work that began in May 2001 at the Achieving Healthy Weights in Children workshop.

Currently there are some initiatives in the province attempting to address this concern, and the HEA pulls together the groups who sponsor these initiatives, and others, to make a concerted effort to develop a comprehensive and coordinated strategy which will encourage Island children and youth to enjoy, understand and benefit from healthy eating.

The purpose of this strategy is to guide the work of the Healthy Eating Alliance over the next three years. The goals and strategies that follow were developed as a means to improve the current eating behaviours of our Island children and youth. This plan supports the Wellness Strategy outlined in the Strategic Plan of the Health and Social Services System (2001-2005) as well as the Province's Strategy for Healthy Living which will encourage and support Islanders to address the risk factors that contribute to chronic disease (tobacco use, unhealthy eating and physical inactivity). This document describes the issue of overweight and the poor eating habits of Island children, and identifies the Alliance's vision, mission, goals, objectives and 3-year action plan.

The goals of the HEA are to increase nutrition education and promote healthy eating to students, parents, teachers, and all those who work with children; to increase access to safe and healthy foods in every place where children gather; and to increase our understanding of how children and youth are currently eating and why, and how we can best improve their current eating behaviours through up-to-date and quality research.

The HEA is guided by a Steering Committee, with diverse representation. There are two working groups: Nutrition Education and promotion, and Access to Safe and healthy Foods. In addition, an ad hoc committee on research and surveillance provides expertise to the Alliance as required.

The Healthy Eating Alliance is an action-oriented group, dedicated to making a real difference in the health and every-day lives of Prince Edward Islanders.

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PEI Healthy Eating Alliance

"...working to improve the eating habits of children and youth on P.E.I."

Introduction

The purpose of this strategy is to guide the work of the Healthy Eating Alliance over the next three years. The goals and strategies that follow were developed as a means to improve the current eating behaviours reduce obesity among our Island children and youth. This plan supports the Wellness Strategy outlined in the Strategic Plan of the Health and Social Services System(2001-2005) by addressing one of the major risk factors for chronic disease. This document describes the problem of obesity and the poor eating habits of among Island children, and identifies the Alliance's vision, mission, goals, objectives and 3-year action plans for each of the working groups.

Rationale

Nutrition is essential for good health and well-being. It is of particular importance for children, who have high nutritional needs for growth and development. Many aspects of child health are directly impacted by nutrition. Making poor food choices or not having healthy food choices available, combined with inactivity, can lead to overweight and obesity in children In the past 20 years, the number of obese children in Canada has doubled. Overweight children are more likely to become overweight adults. Since the behaviours that increase the risk of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes and cancer begin early in life, it is essential that preventative efforts begin in childhood.

Poor nutrition in childhood has also has a negative impact on cognitive development and school performance, increases the potential for infection and irritability and results in a low energy levels. Children who skip meals, or who do not have adequate dietary intake, show decreased readiness to learn and cognitive functioning. Speed and accuracy of information retrieval is affected, as is working memory, verbal fluency, attention span, absenteeism, and behaviour in general.

The School Health Study (1999) which is a study that looked at children in grades 4-8 from Charlottetown, PEI and Stratford, Ontario showed that less than half of the students were drinking milk at least twice a day and one-third do not drink milk daily. Children on PEI eat less vegetables, and more pop, chips, cakes and french fries than children in Ontario. A more recent study conducted in 2001 in the Eastern School District also suggested that Island children are not doing well with respect to the quality of their diets or the frequency of breakfast consumption. This survey, which covered 10 schools, indicated that 10% of children in elementary school did not eat breakfast and this increased to 66% for high school students. Other findings of the 2001 study were similar to those of the School Health Study (1999) with low milk, and fruit and vegetable consumption, and high consumption of high-fat snacks.

Current Initiatives

Currently on PEI, government, Health Regions, individual organizations and community groups have programs and services that address healthy eating on some level. For example, various churches and community groups operate Community Kitchens, where participants join together to prepare meals for their families at home. Grocery stores offer educational tours and cooking classes for parents. Approximately half of schools across the Island provide some type of breakfast or snack programs at little or no cost to the children. Family resource centres provide various programs that teach and promote healthy eating to their participants. There are also nutritional services offered by community dietitians to high risk pregnant women to improve birth outcomes and to parents of young children. While some programing exists, given the high rates of childhood obesity and poor eating habits, there is room for improvement. The PEI Healthy Eating Alliance will attempt to enhance and build on these efforts and provide opportunities for greater coordination and collaboration.

Consultations

As a first step in addressing these issues in PEI, a multi-sectoral workshop on Achieving Healthy Weights for Island Children was held in May 2001. The goal of the workshop was to increase the understanding of the problem of childhood obesity in Canada, and to begin to identify strategies to promote healthy weights in Island children. Following this workshop, a healthy eating working group was formed to help improve the eating habits of Island children and youth. The group recognized that the key to supporting healthier eating and healthy body weight is through a comprehensive approach which includes

healthy public policies, changes in social norms, and supportive environments which enable individuals to make healthy choices.

With the support of the Department of Health and Social Services and endorsement by the Department of Education, the healthy eating working group hosted a one-day workshop on November 28, 2001 for representatives from school districts, various associations, government departments, UPEI, community organizations and professions to come together to begin working on improving healthy eating for Island children. This group then formed the PEI Healthy Eating Alliance.

As the development of the Healthy Eating Alliance continued, a Steering Committee was formally identified and participants from the workshop divided into two Working Groups. These Working Groups are called "The Nutrition Promotion and Education Working Group" and the "The Access To Safe and Healthy Foods Working Group". A follow-up planning workshop was held in February 2002 to discuss the Healthy Eating Alliance's goals and objectives. These objectives became the foundation for developing Working Groups.

The Healthy Eating Alliance has been successful in bringing together a diverse federation of groups, government departments, university faculties, community organizations, professionals from all disciplines, and interested people from all sectors across PEI in a joint effort to make a positive and long-lasting impact on the health of Island children and youth. The successful formation of a Healthy Eating Alliance and the development and implementation of a comprehensive Healthy Eating Strategy for Island children and youth will make Prince Edward Island a leader in promoting health of our children.

The PEI Healthy Eating Strategy is based on:

- Input from consultations with stakeholders
- Previous provincial and national reports and studies addressing obesity and healthy eating
- Current research on eating behaviours of children and youth in PEI and across Canada

A Healthy Eating Strategy for PEI

The PEI Healthy Eating Alliance is committed to delivering a comprehensive strategy that is evidence-based. In the early stages of development, a preliminary environmental scan of best practices in school nutrition and food programs in Canada and the US was conducted. The best practices that were identified as contributing to the success of school nutrition programs in both, Canada and the US are as follows:

1) a comprehensive approach; e.g., includes skill development, policy, school catering, staff education, and involves parent, education and industry representatives;
2) a curriculum focus; e.g., consider both learning and teaching factors and allow for appropriate resources and adequate staff development;
3) creating a supportive environment that promotes and fosters healthy eating;
4) are based on strong partnerships; and
5) a strong evaluation component built into the development of the program.

As work continued, a more extensive literature review of best practices to promote healthy eating among children and youth was completed. The Alliance will continue to use the findings from this literature review as a foundation for its action plans.

The Healthy Eating Alliance has been successful in bringing a broad group of interested individuals together to work on this initiative in the true sense of a partnership (see Appendix A for Terms of Reference with full listing of current Alliance members). The Alliance is guided by a **partnership agreement** that defines how all of members will work together towards a common goal. The partnership agreement reads as follows:

> The PEI Healthy Eating Alliance is a collaborative partnership to address the challenges of healthy eating among children and youth. The partnership will serve to coordinate existing activities, identify research opportunities, reduce duplication, maximize the use of resources, and measure effectiveness of healthy eating initiatives. The strategy will be sustained through the collective efforts of the partners in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the actions.

The Alliance has also identified the following guiding principles to assist in decision-making and planning:

a) To build on the work that has already been initiated by individuals, government departments and organizations, and to strengthen partnerships whose purpose it is to improve the nutritional health of Islanders.

b) To build support, increase capacity and obtain commitment for a comprehensive strategy for healthy eating for children and youth within the members' own organizations/government departments.

Structure of The PEI Healthy Eating Alliance

A structure for the PEI Healthy Eating Alliance was formulated by the members at an initial workshop and will continue to evolve as work progresses (see Appendix A for Terms of Reference). The following structure will allow for clarity in communication and decision-making.

1.	**Steering Committee** -	A committee of individuals from various sectors who provide coordination and guidance to the Healthy Eating Alliance and its working groups.
2.	**2 Working Groups** -	• Nutrition Education and Promotion • Access to Safe and Healthy Foods
3.	**Research and Surveillance Committee**	An 'ad hoc' committee who will provide expertise to the Alliance as required.

Evaluation

In addition to the specific activities outlined in the Research and Surveillance component of the Strategy, an evaluation framework will be developed to measure process and outcome indicators of the Strategy.

Vision: Optimal nutritional health for Island children and youth.

Mission: The PEI Healthy Eating Alliance is committed to working collaboratively to develop a comprehensive and coordinated strategy which will encourage Island children and youth to enjoy, understand and benefit from healthy eating. The Alliance will cultivate and foster an environment that promotes and supports healthy eating behaviours.

Goals:

1) To increase nutrition education and promote healthy eating to students, parents, teachers and all those who have an impact on how children eat.

2) To increase access to safe and healthy foods in all types of environments where children gather.

3) To conduct research which increases our understanding of how children and youth are currently eating, factors influencing eating habits and how we can best improve their current eating behaviours through up-to-date and quality research.

Strategies: The HEA will employ the following strategies to obtain these goals:

1) To Promote and Support Healthy Eating
2) To Build Capacity and Knowledge
3) To Strengthen Community Action
4) To Build Healthy Public Policy
5) To Support the Development of Health Promoting Environments
6) To Conduct Research and Evaluation
7) To Assist in Knowledge Transfer

The following tables describe the Action Plans that the Working Groups have developed and hope to implement over the next 3 years. The Action items were created by the members in the groups in a collaborative process and have been endorsed by the entire Alliance. A third Action Plan has been developed by the Ad Hoc Research and Surveillance Committee which outlines the work that will be done in the research and surveillance component of the Strategic Plan.

Goal#1: To increase nutrition education and promote healthy eating to students, parents, teachers and all those who have an impact on how children eat.

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
• Increase the number of Island children and youth whose eating habits are within the guidelines of the Nutrition Recommendations for Canadians. • Increase public awareness of the benefits of healthy eating and the health risks associated with poor eating habits. • Increase the number of Island children and youth who are within a healthy weight range for their age and height. • Increase the number of home, school and community environments in which healthy eating is promoted and supported. • Increase access to age and developmentally appropriate nutrition education, programming, etc	***Promote and Support Healthy Eating***	Establish Healthy Eating Week
		Raise profile of Nutrition Month in cooperation with Dietitians of Canada
		Partner with media to promote healthy eating
		Develop newsletters for parents
		Deliver presentations to parents, Home & School, and other interested groups
		Develop a visual identity (logo) for the HEA
		Develop a website for the HEA
		Use athletic teams to promote nutrition messages
	Build Capacity and Knowledge	Offer professional development in nutrition for teachers
		Provide nutrition curriculum training for health education teachers.
		Provide training in sports nutrition for coaches
		Develop healthy eating information kits for use by community organizations
		Create inventory of existing nutrition resources and programs
	Strengthen Community Action	Work with businesses, workplaces, Community and Family Resource Centres and recreational facilities to promote healthy eating
		Partner with Active Living Alliance

Goal #2: To increase access to safe and healthy foods in all types of environments where children gather.

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
• Increase the number of Island children who have access to nutritious food. • Increase sustainability of food programs (secure adequate funds). • Increase the number of programs that adopt best practices - i.e. develop standards in nutritional value, food safety, etc. • Increase the number of policies adopted to support healthy eating. • Increase the number of foodservice operations (which serve children and youth) where healthy choices are accessible and affordable.	***Build Healthy Public Policy***	Support the development of healthy eating policies/programs in all places where children gather, including schools and recreation centres
	Support the Development of Health Promoting Environments	Involve Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Department of Health and Social Services, schools, and fruit and vegetable growers in the development and implementation of a school program to increase access to fruits and/or vegetables, based on the School Milk Program model.
		Support the development of new school-based food programs where needed
		Seek core funding for Coordinator position to oversee activities province-wide, including training and monitoring the use of Best Practices in school and community-based food programs.
		Serve as adjudicating body for grants from BFL (Breakfast for Learning) and GIFT (Grocery Industry Foundation Together) to programs in PEI.
		Formalize membership with the Breakfast for Learning organization
	Strengthen Community Action	Promote and educate program volunteers and staff of about Best Practices for school and community-based food programs for children about Best Practices
		Continue to join with Atlantic partners to seek funding from Grocery Industry Foundation Together (GIFT)
		Partner with Children's Emergency Foundation
		Develop a tool kit based on Best Practices for communities/schools who are interested in starting a food program for children.

Goal #3: To increase our understanding of how children and youth are currently eating and why, and how we can best improve their current eating behaviours through up-to-date and quality research.

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
• Increase the amount of information available on (knowledge of) food services and policies in Island schools. • Increase the amount of baseline and monitoring data available on eating behaviours and dietary intake of Island children. • Conduct research to identify barriers to achieving healthy eating. • Increase the number of policy decisions, influencing healthy eating in children and youth, which are evidenced-based. • Increase knowledge of what information/opportunities/access parents and children want/need regarding nutrition information. • Increase the number of interventions influencing healthy eating in children and youth which are evidence-based.	***Conduct Research and Evaluation***	Conduct Food and Nutrition Programs and Services Survey of Eastern and Western School Board schools
		Conduct Food and Nutrition Programs and Services Survey of French Language School Board
		Conduct eating behaviour survey in Francophone students in the French Language School Board and Mi'kmaq children and youth
		Present findings of Food and Nutrition Services and Programs Survey, Eating Behaviour Surveys to principals in Eastern and Western School Board
		Present findings of Eating Behaviour Surveys, Food and Nutrition Services and Programs Survey to principals in French Language School Board
		Write and submit grant proposal to secure funding for pilot nutrition intervention
		Write and submit grant proposal to secure funding for "model" program and policy which utilizes a comprehensive approach (nutrition, activity and smoking)
	Assist in Knowledge Transfer	Finalize literature review on Best Practices in nutrition policies and programs; circulate to working groups
		Provide guidance and direction to working groups in applying Best Practices to the implementation of their action plans if necessary
		Assist working groups in determining appropriate evaluation methods and in conducting evaluations when necessary

Prince Edward Island's Healthy Eating Alliance

Terms of Reference
June 2002

PURPOSE

To develop, implement and evaluate a Comprehensive Healthy Eating Strategy to improve the eating habits of children and youth on PEI.

RATIONALE

This Alliance has been formed as a follow up to the work that began in May of 2001 at the Achieving Healthy Weights in Children Workshop. That workshop focused on activity, nutrition and healthy lifestyles and on the long-term effects of obesity on health including the increased risk for chronic disease.

The initial target group* of the Alliance will be school-age children and youth and the wider community, for the following reasons:

- the school years are habit-forming years and a key time to establish eating patterns
- the wider community, and the resources it offers has a great impact on the health and rearing of our children
- children spend a great amount of their time in school
- schools are an ideal environment for early intervention and health teaching
- schools are a great source of influence in children's lives

* As the Alliance evolves and the strategy develops, our focus will expand to include other population groups such as the early years (0-8 years).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

a) To build on the work that has already been initiated by individuals, government departments and organizations, and to strengthen partnerships whose purpose it is to improve the nutritional health of Islanders.

b) To build support, increase capacity and obtain commitment for a comprehensive strategy for healthy eating for children and youth within the members' own organizations/government departments.

SCOPE OF WORK

a) To develop and implement a comprehensive, evidence-based strategy to improve eating habits of children and youth.

b) To develop a measurement and evaluation component for the strategy.

c) To establish multi-sectoral sub-committees as necessary for specific tasks and recruit new partners as deemed appropriate by the sub-committees.

DELIVERABLES

a) A comprehensive, evidence-based healthy eating strategy including vision, values, principles, and goals. This will include an agreement of commitment to an action plan by partners to begin implementing the plan within a 6-12 month time frame following the February 2002 workshop.

b) An evaluation framework to measure, where feasible, outcomes of implementation, including process and impact measures.

c) The Healthy Eating Alliance will conduct and/or assist in research to design, support and evaluate healthy eating behaviours, programs and policies.

4. An interim report to be provided to the Ministers of Education and Health and Social Services after six months after the Strategy is announced with a full progress report to follow after one year and annually thereafter.

e) A communication plan, that includes an annual public release to increase awareness of Alliance activities, and educate Islanders on the benefits of healthy eating.

MEETINGS

Meeting times, agendas, and frequency will be determined by the various working groups and the Steering Committee. It is anticipated that the Steering Committee will meet once a month at the minimum for a period of 6 months, however additional meetings may be required.

The work of the Steering Committee will be co-chaired by representatives from both the health and education sectors. The work of the Steering Committee will be supported by resource staff from within the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Education.

MEETINGS (*continued*)

Decisions will be made by consensus if at all possible. If the committee is unable to reach consensus, a decision will be made by voting.

Written summaries of the meetings will be maintained and circulated to committee members.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Individual members are accountable to their respective organizations for communication and follow-up of commitments related to the implementation of the strategy.

The Alliance is accountable to the Ministers of Health and Social Services and Education through the Deputy Ministers.

ALLIANCE MEMBERSHIP

PEI Division Canadian Cancer Society
Heart and Stroke Foundation of PEI
PEI Active Living Alliance
PEI Home Economics Assoc.
Dietitians of Canada
Medical Society of PEI
Island Pediatricians
Association of Nurses of PEI
Breastfeeding Coalition of PEI
Atlantic Superstore
Sobey's Food Warehouse
PEI Teachers' Federation
PEI Home and School Federation
Eastern School District
Western School Board
French School Board
Red Cross
Family Resource Centres
Socio-Behavioural Cancer Research Network
Parent representatives
l'Association des Femmes Acadienne et Francophones de l'I-P-E
Department of Education
Dept of Agriculture - School Milk Program
Dept. of Community and Cultural Affairs (Culture, Heritage & Recreation)
Dept. of Health and Social Services
Regional Health Authorities
- Community Nutrition
- Public Health Nursing

Health Canada (Health Promotion and Protection Division)
Early Childhood Development Association
Milk Maritime
UPEI
- Faculty of Education
- Department of Family and Nutritional Sciences
- School of Nursing
- Department of Psychology

Dental Association of PEI
PEI Dental Hygienists' Association

Key References

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